



Oak Bottom Water Ditch Trail



View of snow-capped Shasta Bally in mid-spring.

DIRECTIONS

Starting at the Whiskeytown Visitor Center drive west on Highway 299 approximately 5 miles until arriving at the entrance to Oak Bottom Campground. Turn left here and follow the road for a short distance until noting the sign for Oak Bottom Water Ditch Trail on the right. It is just before the campground store. Parking is right next to the trailhead. This 2.75 mile easy trail is perfect for a short walk along the shore of Whiskeytown Lake.

Follow the trail approximately 50 yards down a gentle descent to a "T" at the bottom where you see a sliver of the lake. Turn right. Follow the lakeshore for awhile, then walk close to Highway 299, but only for about 300 yards. The trail again follows the lakeshore most the rest of the way, except for a short break when passing through a gate and crossing an old dirt road. The trail ends at a day use parking area near Carr Powerhouse.

FEATURES

Difficulty Level: Easy
Length: 2.75 miles one way
Elevation: Essentially no elevation change
Historic Clear Creek Canal now converted to a trail

TRAIL DESCRIPTION

Part of this trail was once a water ditch that funneled water to mining operations in the Clear Creek area during the Gold Rush Era of the 1850s. It was one of many ditches and flumes that crisscrossed the land to move water. This water system allowed miners to work year round.

Why construct a water ditch next to a lake? The lake itself was not constructed until the 1960s. Some of the ditches were then filled in to make pathways like this one.

The canal, now converted to a trail, is wide and flat in most places and provides easy access to the shoreline for those who would like to cool off with a swim. It is popular with both hikers and mountain bikers. Runners enjoy its peace and the chance for quiet reflection as they jog during the early morning and evening hours. In addition, the trail offers several good fishing spots. Fishermen pull trout, bass, and catfish out of the lake.

Early risers may see bald eagles fishing on the arm of this lake. Great blue herons are often

spotted in the little coves and marshy areas near the lake - shore. Look for western pond turtles sunning themselves on logs jutting out of the water.



Foothill and knobcone pines, manzanita, and several types of oak provide a fair amount of shade along the trail. Small seasonal streams also keep it cool. While following the trail along the shoreline, look across the water and notice Shasta Bally, 6,209 feet in elevation, the tallest mountain in the park. In some years there is still snow at its higher reaches in July!

While hiking next to Highway 299, notice the contrast of north-facing Shasta Bally, compared to the south facing slopes. These slopes are covered almost exclusively with manzanita. Note the influence that direction and topography have on the plant communities present. Together, these two factors create interesting micro habitats.

Hikers will observe some interesting wildflowers along the trail. Indian Warrior, a unique flower, is present from late winter to early spring. One can picture its dense spike of blood red tubular flowers as an Indian headdress. The leaves clustered

The Western Pond Turtle



The western pond turtle uses both land and water for its life cycle. It can be observed searching for food in slow-moving water bottoms or along banks. Turtles eat small aquatic insects, crustaceans (creatures such as small aquatic shrimp, crayfish or crab), or carrion (dead or decaying flesh). Since they are unable to swallow in air, they must eat underwater. Visitors will observe them "hauling out" or basking on logs, rocks or floating vegetation.

(continued)



(continued from front)

around its base are purple tinged and fern-like.

Another unusual flower is *Calochortus*, or hairy cat's ear, which appears in late spring. It takes its name from the shape of its white petals and the dense, dark purple hairs within. A member of the Lily family, each plant has just one long leaf and one to seven flowers per plant.

The trail ends at a day use parking area near Carr Powerhouse. Just beyond the trailhead sign is a short stretch of asphalt road. Follow the road for a short distance until arriving at the Carr Powerhouse with its large metal pipes, or penstocks, heading over the hill.

The Carr Powerhouse is part of the Central Valley Water Project

that was created for the purposes of flood control, irrigation, and power generation. Water from the Trinity River to the northwest is transferred through penstocks to Whiskeytown Lake.

From the lake, water is piped to Keswick Dam and released into the Sacramento River. Whiskeytown Lake was created as part of this project.



Whiskeytown National Recreation Area, administered by the National Park Service, gets its name from the gold mining town established in 1850 during the California Gold Rush. After its initial beginning as a wilderness outpost, Whiskeytown became a permanent stopover for travelers and later stagecoaches traveling the main route to the Oregon territory.

The town was inundated in the summer of 1963, following the construction of Whiskeytown Dam, as part of the Central Valley Water Project. Shasta Dam, also part of this huge hydroelectric project, preceded it in 1945. Water from the Pit, McCloud and Sacramento Rivers were impounded in this process. President John F. Kennedy dedicated the dam in September 1963.